

Anchors Aweigh! by Punzie the Platypus

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Summary: Steve's first day at Scoops Ahoy! Robin shows him the ins and outs of both the mall and scooping ice cream, makes fun of him at every turn, and creates the iconic YOU RULE I YOU SUCK whiteboard. Mike, Lucas, and Will all visit Steve, who hates his whack outfit, strikes out with the ladies, and wonders how he's going to last to the end of his shift, never mind the whole summer.

Anchors Aweigh!

Soli Deo gloria

DISCLAIMER: I do NOT own Stranger Things. Or Donald Duck. Or Superman. Or Red Hots. Or Chips Ahoy! Or The Gap. Or Claire's. Also, Einstein and Farrah Fawcett are their own persons.

Who do we love? Scoops Troop!

Robin was all politeness and smiles and offering her hand in a handshake when the general manager of Scoops Ahoy introduced her to their newest hire, but the first thing she said on his first day when they were alone were, "Who would've thought King Steve would end working in a craphole like this?" Not meanly, not smugly, more . . . just being observant.

Steve's already confused face furrowed with drawn eyebrows. "Do we like, know each other or something?"

"I went to Hawkins High and that's all you will ever need to know about me," Robin said, shrugging. She stretched her arms out, showing off the counter and the freezer full of varieties of different flavored ice creams, and said, saluting him, "Welcome aboard the ship *Scoops Ahoy*, newest member of our crew."

". . . 'kay. Thanks," Steve said, uncertain as to how she liked him and failing to gauge her accurately. He followed Robin after she disappeared behind the scenes and found her digging through one of the six tiny cabinets hiding in the backroom.

"Here." She threw a couple of paper wrapped packages at his chest. They fell into his quick arms; he was more used to catching a basketball to the chest than his new uniform. "The bathroom's past Hot Dog on a Stick. Hurry up and change." There was a mischievous gleam in her eyes, despite her face looked bored. "We've got ice cream to scoop."

Steve *knew* the uniforms at Scoops Ahoy were abominable, but he

still kinda figured it would look better on him than it actually did. He sighed as he came through the back of the closed store to face a Robin who couldn't hide her big fake gasp or stifle her hilarious snorts of laughter. "Are these uniforms seriously mandatory?" he asked, annoyed.

"Fortunately," Robin heaved.

Steve groaned. "I look like Donald Duck!" Unfortunately, that only served to make Robin laugh harder, her eyes all screwed up and her head flung back.

Steve looked at this pretty girl laughing her ass off at him in this stupid outfit he'd have to wear all summer, and wondered if he'd even show up to his next shift.

Robin regained control enough to say in a serious voice, "But you forgot something."

Steve scoffed and folded his arms, not meeting her eyes. "What? Forgot what?"

Robin touched the white sailor hat atop her own head.

"Nu-uh," Steve said, shaking his head. He *purposely* left off the stupid sailor hat. He'd wear the cutesy cartoon pantaloons and the limp red tie, but the sailor hat crushing his perfect hair was a step too far. "You see this hair? This is a chick magnet. Covering this up is a crime against humanity."

"It's also against company policy to *not* cover it up," Robin said. She cocked her head. "You do *want* to keep your job, right? Imagine losing it on the first day just because of some silly dress code." She grabbed the white hat from his clutched fingers, delicately fluffed it up, and set it like a mocking crown on top of his perfect hair. She gave him a grating smile and said, "All hail King Steve."

Steve blinked at her and said, "This is going to be a long summer."

Robin, hands on her hips, lost her mocking grin and sighed. "Yes, dingus, it certainly is."

"Wait, dingus?" Steve said as Robin turned away to retrieve the day's supply of ice cream cones and sprinkles from storage. "Name's Steve."

"I know. Fun fact, I was introduced to you personally by our manager all of fifteen minutes ago," Robin said as she opened the door and let it almost slam in his face. "Here, dingus, take this box of bananas. We'll need them before the day is out."

Steve rolled his eyes but decided to ignore her and just do his job. If this was what he had to do, then he'd do it. He tried to ignore Robin and ignore the fact that he didn't make it into Tech and ignore his father's mocking words about how he needed to get a job this summer—*any* job that would take this son of his who couldn't even make it into college. He'd show his stupid dad. He'd show Robin, who probably *wanted* him to quit (Starcourt Mall had been open all of three weeks and they were already hiring again? The guy before him probably decided his ice cream scooping tenure wasn't worth being abused by Robin every shift) and also, he'd show himself. He'd show himself that when he set his mind to something, he could *do* it. You know, hopefully.

Robin walked him through a bunch of stuff. She seemed to enjoy how terrible his first attempts were, but she was a thorough, knowledgeable teacher. She showed him where all the utensils and other ingredients were kept once they were brought behind the counter, what the portions according to what serving size the customer ordered would be, and also what they would do with the different kinds of deliveries the store got almost daily. He grimaced when he went to raise the iron gate that separated them from the rest of the mall and it wouldn't budge. Robin didn't say a word; she just raised an eyebrow. He didn't meet her eye and tried lifting them again; his arm muscles screamed, but he got them up.

"Nice job, Superman," Robin said.

A crowd of eager kids and teenagers and mothers with perms and lipstick were already waiting outside the now lifted gate. It was 10 AM sharp. Nothing said Midwestern America than a crowd outside a shop that sold nothing but ice cream at 10 AM on a Wednesday morning.

"Let's see you on the floor, Harrington," Robin said as they hurried back behind the counter. "Show me what you got."

Steve, his lips pressed in a fine line, decided something right then and there. Robin thought she was so much better at this job than he was, just because he'd been there all of twenty minutes while she'd been doing this for twenty days. Well, she could tease him all she wanted. He'd show her up. "All right, step right up, ladies and germs," he called out in a showman's voice, calling forth the charming Steve Harrington all the kids at Hawkins High knew and loved, "come and check out our selection of flavors here at Scoops Ahoy! Feel free to try a sample—we have peanut butter swirl, we have cookies 'n' crème, fudge ripple, the *U.S.S. Scoops Ahoy!*—"

"What's in the *U.S.S. Scoops Ahoy!*?" some girl about twelve wondered.

Steve's face froze as she broke his concentration. "I don't—I don't know," he faltered.

"What about this one?" A particularly hot redhead tapped a manicured fingertip against the glass by some pink looking ice cream. Her big brown eyes flickered up to capture King Steve's attention; he blinked and stammered—*gotta impress the hot girl gotta impress the hot girl gotta make shit up to impress the hot girl*—

"Well, that is one of our specialty flavors—um, berry, like raspberry, like pink, like girly—girly—girl—hey, hey, Steve. Steve Harrington. Almost voted Homecoming King this past school year." Homecoming King went to Billy Hargrove and Tammy Thompson—Steve wasn't *bitter*—Steve didn't care about stupid Homecoming—and he didn't have a Homecoming Queen, anyway—but that—that was *besides* the point.

"Can I try it?" Hot Redhead blinked her eyes and her eyelashes touched her cheekbones.

"Yeah—yeah, of course. Of course you can try it," Steve said, scrambling to grab one of the sample spoons. His mouth curved in a smile. "One sample, coming right up."

Robin decided that she'd coach Steve (*again*) on sample size later (the taste on that tiny spoon was more of a scoop than a taste) but she held back; she wanted to see this play out. Tongue against her cheek, her laughter wasn't quite as stifled as she could manage as Hot Redhead put the whole big scoop of Red Hot Cinnamon past her pink lips; the rest of her face turned Red Hot.

Steve's face was a study in contesting emotions. Confusion and horror finally won out against practiced confidence intermingled with his characteristic smirk; Hot Redhead, coughing up a lung, torpedoed out of the ice cream parlor in mad search for a water fountain far, far away from there. Her friend group scoffed and muttered at Steve as they quickly went after her.

Steve couldn't think of a single thing to say.

"Well," Robin said, joining his side after deciding remaining on the sidelines was dangerous to the health of Hawkins and the parlor's business, "*you suck.*"

"Yeah, well," Steve faced Robin and sighed. "Yeah, whatever."

"Ready for me to teach you a few things?" Robin asked patiently.

Steve waved a lame hand over to the counter. "I'm ready."

Robin took the reins and led the way until they got through this initial opening crowd. She narrated what she was doing to Steve while she took orders, scooped ice cream, and took him by the hand through ringing up the orders on the register. Steve frantically listened to her many varied commands and tried to keep his little boat afloat as Hurricane Robin whirled around him. Once the dust settled, Robin, leaning against the case said, "Now, by the end of this, you're going to have a stomach ache."

"Like I don't already?" Steve said. He took off his hat and ran a hand through his hair; he was *winded*. That was a lot of people they just took care of!

"Go wash your hands," Robin said.

"What, why?" Steve asked, confused.

"Hello? Touching your hair? We serve *food*," Robin scoffed.

Steve straightened. He'd let himself get pushed around by Robin too much today already, but she'd stepped past a line. "My hair isn't *dirty* —"

"Didn't say it was. Go wash your hands," Robin said.

Steve decided he wasn't gonna argue. He just said, "No."

"Yes," Robin said patiently.

"No, I won't! I've put up with a lot of shit today but I'm tired of getting pushed around!" Steve said.

Robin approached him, making him quiet down 'cause now there was a pretty girl three inches from his face. "You will go wash your hands because it is company policy. If you want this job to last more than just today, you will go wash your hands or I will *personally* make sure the manager fires you because you think you're above some company policy about your *stupid* hair." She slapped the sailor hat back onto his pretty hair, just to grind some salt into the deep wound. "The hat or a hairnet." She whispered in his ear, "Your choice, Harrington."

Steve muttered to himself as he slammed the double-hinged door to the back behind him; if she wasn't so bossy and annoying as hell, that would've been kinda hot.

"Hey," he said, coming back from washing his hands, "that back hallway, does that lead around the entire back of the mall?"

"Something like that; does it matter?" Robin groaned.

"Does it like, have doors that go into all the other stores? Like, the theater, maybe?"

"If you're asking if you can sneak into movies without paying for them, the answer is yes; also, can we move it along here?" she said, waving her hand. "Now," once Steve was begrudgingly by her side again, "about that stomach ache." She scooped up a taste on the sample spoon and said, "The only way to be able to tell customers what flavor the ice cream is, besides reading off the label off it—"

"I *can* read," Steve insisted.

"—is to taste it," Robin said, offering him the spoon. "Now, don't go on eating all our merchandise. But go ahead; try every one, get a literal taste for them, so then you can describe them to the customers."

Steve reluctantly took the spoon from Robin and stuck it in his mouth. He didn't even need to know the name of this one to identify it. "Butterscotch," he moaned appreciatively around the spoon.

Robin sidled away from him to grab another container of fudge ripple. "Oh, yeah." She was halfway through the door when she called over her shoulder, "No double-dipping!"

Steve withheld his spoon a quarter of an inch away from something chocolatey and quickly disposed of his butterscotch spoon before Robin noticed. Quick work around the flavors told him that the *U.S.S. Ahoy!* was Chips Ahoy! cookies with salted caramel (salt in sweet foods sounded super weird, but the '80s were an experimental food time) and a quick look up when he heard the ding showed him a Mrs. Karen Wheeler, little Holly Wheeler in pink overalls, and Mike wearing a concerned look.

"Is that why you came to work here? For the free ice cream?" Mike wondered.

"It's—it's not *free*—it's part of my job," Steve said, dramatically throwing his latest spoon over his shoulder (successfully landing it in the open trash can behind him—the basketball star that he was) and offering a hand out. "Hi, Mrs. Wheeler, great to see you."

Mrs. Wheeler shook his hand and said, "Congratulations on the job, Steve. Do you like it?"

"It's—it's great. It's great work, keeps my hands busy, pays good money," Steve said.

"Capitalism at its finest," Mrs. Wheeler said. "I remember being a teenager with my first summer job. Mike, did I ever tell you how I made ice cream sodas at a diner for two summers?"

"Only about a million times," Mike groaned.

"I heard 'Capitalism' in this conversation, so I must enter," Robin said, showing inconveniently up. "'Cause I've got some views on that—"

"ROBIN," Steve said in a loud voice, an arm around her waist as he directed her attention to the suburban mother and her two kids, "I want you to meet Mrs. Wheeler. Mrs. Wheeler, this is my co-worker, Robin—"

"Wait, Wheeler. As in Nancy Wheeler's mother?" Robin wondered, her eyes squinting in thought.

"Oh, yes, that's me," Mrs. Wheeler giggled, raising her hand.

Steve did *not* like the way this conversation could be going. "ANYWAY, Mrs. Wheeler, what brings you lovely folks to Starcourt Mall today?"

"Well, JCPenney. Mike here needed some new summer clothes." Mrs. Wheeler reached out to affectionately rumple her only son's hair, despite the look of obvious annoyance displayed on her only son's face. "He's grown *so much* this past winter."

"Dustin told us you'd be applying here before he left for camp, so we decided to stop by and see if you got the job," Mike explained.

"Man, I miss that little squirt. When's he getting back?" Steve wondered.

"Three weeks," Mike said.

Steve scoffed. "That's a long time." Mike didn't seem too concerned about it, while Steve wished the kid was here now. 'Course Wheeler now had El as his girlfriend, so he was okay, but Steve's luck with the ladies was going through a dry spell, and dry spells are easier to handle when you have someone to hang out at the bar with.

"Wait, so there's like, more of you?" Robin said, looking from Mike to Steve.

"Yeah; I mean, of course there are; whatever," Steve said lamely

before planting his hands against the counter and saying in a confident voice while completely ignoring Robin's stare, "and what kind of ice cream can I interest the Wheeler family in today?"

Mrs. Wheeler ended up forgoing ice cream (she wanted to keep her beach bod—she was thinking about buying a new swimsuit for the pool) but Mike and Holly eagerly smacked against cones (it was their reward for getting dragged around a department store for two hours). Steve waved fondly after them before he was affronted by Robin's suspicious face. "What?" he said.

"Are they like, relatives or something?" she wondered.

"No, just—they're the Wheelers." How do you explain to this girl that they were the family of the girl he dated in high school, whom he *loved*, while the kid brother was also part of this secret group of people who knew all the ins and outs and the truths behind the scandalous Hawkins Lab?

Robin didn't blink but stared at him for a long time before concluding with: "Definitely weird."

Steve was okay with that summary. "Yeah. Fine. *Definitely weird*. Can do." Robin left his side, he breathed in, and he said to the next set of customers, "Hi, welcome to Scoops Ahoy! Where can I take you on our flavor voyage today?" Only for that next set of customers to be Lucas, Max, and Lucas's little sister, Erica.

"Flavor voyages, curiosity doors—what's next, feelings journeys?" Max asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Where'd you guys come from?" Steve wondered, amazed. They just appeared outta thin air.

"The Gap," Max said, smacking gum while holding a loaded shopping bag.

"Claire's is where it's at," Erica said, showing off her newest set of bracelets and fake jewels.

"Remind me to *never* take you shopping *ever* again," Lucas scowled. "Worst waste of two hours in my life."

"I think you look *totally tubular*," Max said to Erica.

Erica gave her a sidewise look. "I'm guessing you mean that as a compliment." She turned back to Steve. "This is my first time here. Would've been my *third* time if *someone*"—ninety-degree turn to hound on her older brother, who was rolling his eyes,—"hadn't insisted on leaving early *twice* before to go hang out with his stupid nerd friends. I need a sample."

"Which sample? We've got thirty-three different flavors," Steve said.

"All of them," Erica said, undaunted.

"Nu-uh, no way," Lucas said. "I am *not* taking you back to Mom hopped up on sugar. She'll fry my ass." Then his eyes glowed. "But then, once she sees what a terrible babysitter I am, I won't have to take you to the mall anymore!"

"What a genius plan, Einstein," Max said.

"I know, right?" Lucas said, excited.

Erica pressed her nose against the glass and pointed to an empty one. "I want that one."

"We're out of that one," Steve said, deadpan.

Erica looked up at him. "I got eyes, don't I? Go get some more from the back! I. Want. To try it."

Steve had never been stared down by a ten-year-old before, but there were firsts for everything. "Robin!" Steve yelled, without removing his eyes from Erica's, "do we have any more mint chocolate chip in the back?"

"No, we're out until the next shipment comes in tomorrow," Robin said; she leaned back against the counter, arms folded, her face drawn in a smirk. She couldn't *wait* to see this showdown play out.

"But I want to try it," Erica said, her voice low and dangerous.

"Just because you want something doesn't mean it's gonna materialize

out of thin air for ya, kid! Now, what do you want to try that we *do* have?" Steve wondered.

Erica met his eyes with a soul full of vengeance and finally said, "Give me a taste of that rum raisin."

Erica tried seven flavors before Max finally cut her off (if she hadn't, Robin or Steve would've) by saying, "Come on, the music store just got Cataracts' newest CD. I want to hear it before they sell out."

"Okay, Erica, just pick out a scoop," Lucas said.

"Hmmm, but I think I want to try the butter pecan again," Erica said.

"Fine." Lucas said to Steve, "Three cones of butter pecan, Captain." Steve saluted him and Lucas said to Erica, "Then we are *leaving*."

Erica harrumphed, but offered no sassy comeback since her brother was buying her ice cream. She *did* eye Steve as they left the shop. "I'll be back. By the end of the summer, I will have tried *every* flavor at Scoops Ahoy!" She licked her cone and then, as a last parting remark, "And that outfit is super whack."

"Yeah, whatever," Steve said. He scoffed.

"Let's hope we never have to see that little brat again," Robin said. "Or, hopefully, *any* more kids who not only are friends with you, but also call you 'Captain'."

Steve thought, "*Well*," to himself, and less than ten minutes later, there was Will Byers with his mom. But hey, at least he wasn't with Jonathan. Steve only really liked interacting with Jonathan if they were in group projects in life-or-death situations. Less awkward that way.

"Hey Will," Steve said, slamming his hand in a high-five, "how are you feeling, buddy?"

"I'm doing okay," Will nodded.

"Steve, congratulations on the job!" Joyce said excitedly.

"Hey, thanks Mrs. Byers," Steve said. "How are, um, I heard Jonathan and Nancy got jobs together?" He had to clear his throat multiple times to get the words out intelligibly.

"Yes, at the Hawkins Post. It's one of the only places still open on Main Street," Joyce said. She cleared her throat; not to knock Steve's new employer, but Mervald's wasn't doing so hot right now. She brightened, having decided not to guilt-trip the nineteen-year-old working a summer job, and said, "We're just checking out the mall, and Mike let us know that you did get hired, and we wanted to come say 'hi' to you at work!"

"Well, thanks for stopping by. It's good to see familiar faces," Steve said genuinely. (Robin just stood off in the background, watching and wondering how many more pubescent adolescents were going to emerge from the white woodwork.)

"Hey," Will said, holding up an old polaroid camera, "can I take your picture? We're all sending letters to Dustin while he's at summer camp, to catch him up over stuff that's happening this summer. Well," he shrugged a little, "at least *I* am. I want to send your picture in it."

"Wait, don't take my picture! Just, can you add a little P.S. from me? Write, 'Steve 'The Hair' Harrington hopes you're having fun at camp; go to Scoops Ahoy as soon as you come home.' He'll know what it means. Also, when is the exact day he's coming home?"

"June 29th. It's a Saturday," Will said.

"Sweet, sweet. I think I'm . . . working then?" Steve looked over at Robin, as if expecting her to have his entire schedule memorized. She raised her hands in an I-don't-know! gesture and he said, "I'll probably be working then, so he can just come right over. He doesn't know I have the job yet, so this will be a nice little surprise for him to come home to."

"Gotcha. Three weeks," Will said, with a thumb's up.

"Three weeks!" Steve repeated the gesture.

"If you even last that long," was Robin's unnecessary commentating

remark.

Steve fondly watched the mother and son leave, each armed with a chocolate cone, and Robin said, joining his side, "Was that it for your kids?"

"No, didn't you hear? Henderson's at summer camp. He'll be back in three weeks, though. Wait until you meet Henderson!" Steve said excitedly.

"I didn't *want* to meet any of your kids, but that's happened anyway," Robin said.

That was kind of how it was for the rest of the day. They worked eleven hour shifts as the only two people there, from opening until closing. 10 AM to 8 PM. Once closing time came around, Steve was able to pull down the heavy metal gate separating them from the rest of the mall. He looked up when Robin said, "Hey." Across the counter, she'd found a whiteboard; along the header was its blunt title: YOU RULE I YOU SUCK. She drew a dramatic line for the YOU SUCK side of the board.

"You are *not* keeping tally on my rejections from the ladies?" Steve scoffed, once he realized what the one thing Robin could be referring to was.

"Oh *yeah*, I am," Robin said.

Steve scoffed. "Whatever."

Robin cocked her head as she scrutinized him. "Is that *ice cream* in your hair?"

"My hair? Something in my hair?" Steve panicked. He then sighed, annoyed, when he discovered the matted patch near his shoulder.

"Here," Robin said, waving a hand to the sink in the back, "I'll help you get it out. It's been a *long* first day."

"Hell yeah it has," Steve said. He bobbed his head, though, and said, "Thanks."

Robin quirked her lips into a half smile. "No problem."

He led the way to the backroom; they could put off the closing duties for a few minutes. (His first opening, his first day, and his first closing. A lot for eleven hours, but he'd done worse things in eleven hours.) "Now, you don't have any Farrah Fawcett spray, do you?"

"Why on *Earth* would I have Farrah Fawcett spray on hand?" Robin wondered, catching the door behind him. "Just because I'm a girl doesn't mean I have a can of hairspray on hand to use at a moment's notice."

"Have you ever *used* Farrah Fawcett spray?" Upon recognizing the face of someone who had *never* used hair spray *ever*, Steve went on to explain its many merits and pitfalls to watch out for as Robin grabbed the dish detergent.

The ice cream counter was left forgotten for a few minutes as the two coworkers' voices echoed, alone together, inside the ice cream parlor. Their voices were the only noises heard besides the cheerful nautical theme song always playing in the background—and, if one had a keen enough ear to pick up radio sound waves, the muffled voice of a Russian repeating foreign codes.

Robin and Steve are literally THE BEST. I wanted to set up the building blocks for Steve and his relationship with his kids in S3 ep 1.

Thanks for reading! Review?